Data Collection Approach Approval Assignment

Recommendations for Improving Literacy Differentiation Practices at Bacon Academy

Stephen M. Byrne

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Research Question: How can literacy differentiation practices in humanities classes be improved at Bacon Academy?

Approach 1: Semi-structured interviews

The first approach will be semi-structured interviews with five teacher and literacy personnel (e.g., reading instructional coach, reading interventionist) participants, each of whom is familiar with the school's goals toward improving differentiation techniques.

Approach 2: Document reviews

The second approach will be a review of student documents that pertain to the differentiation focus areas. Groups of students who receive differentiation for vocabulary practice, for example, will have that category of their assessments reviewed to see if improvements are made as a result of the practices, and likewise for each literacy domain for which content or instruction is differentiated.

Approach 3: Student surveys

The third approach will be mixed-methods surveys completed by students using Google Forms. Surveys will be conducted after each cycle of differentiation practices, using Likert-style items to ask student opinions on levels of helpfulness / effectiveness of each strategy and inviting them to

elaborate on follow-up items to each survey question. Surveys will be completed by at least 60 but not more than 80 students, depending on final course roster numbers for the school year.

Recommendations for Improving Literacy Differentiation Practices at Bacon Academy

Stephen M. Byrne

School of Education, Liberty University

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Dr. Drew Van Dam

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to provide recommendations for humanities (English and Social Studies) teachers at Bacon Academy with possible solutions and strategies for improving targeted classroom-level differentiation in the literacy domains. This introduction presents information regarding the organizational profile as well as an introduction to the problem and its significance. An overview of the purpose of the study, the central research question, and a list of key terms and definitions conclude this introductory section.

Organizational Profile

Bacon Academy is a suburban public high school in southeastern Connecticut. The mission statement of the school is to "promote a family-like partnership of students, staff, parents, and community. The Academy fosters a strong foundation for learning; provides comprehensive, rigorous academics; and nurtures personal growth, integrity, and respect for all." The high school primarily serves the residents of the town of Colchester, CT, but is also a "school of choice," allowing students from a neighboring district to attend via random lottery selection. The school serves 733 students, 86% of which are Caucasian, while 21% of the student body is considered low-income based on free or reduced-priced lunch eligibility. Less than 1% of the students are classified as English Language Learners, while 12% have learning disabilities. The school employs 61 teachers, resulting in a 12:1 student-to-teacher ratio, and all full-time educators teach five sections of courses in their subject area. Additionally, the school has two instructional coaches, a reading intervention specialist, four guidance counselors, a psychologist, social worker, security guard, school resource (police) officer, and three school administrators: a principal and two assistant principals. This study's focus concerns the humanities departments – English language arts (ELA) and social studies – which consists of 18 teachers (nine ELA and

nine social studies) and offers a total of 33 courses (10 ELA and 23 social studies). Each department is led by one teacher leader who coordinates and leads all departmental staff meetings, serving as the liaison to administration as well as determining use of department funds with input from department members. Curriculum and standards are determined through a collaborative approach by teachers of common courses, which the district's Director of Teaching and Learning approves annually. Instructional decisions concerning which courses are taught and by whom are decided collaboratively with the department members and teacher leaders, with the exceptions being courses that require teachers with specific credentials or certifications (e.g., advanced placement or college dual enrollment). All compulsory courses are leveled based on teacher recommendations and students' academic record, with the levels labeled as two (roughly equivalent to a general level course), three (equivalent to honors), or advanced placement at the higher grades. Traditionally at least one level-two course per grade level has been taught collaboratively with a teacher from the special education department for classes with high numbers of students with individualized education plans (IEPs), but budgetary constraints are making that unlikely for the upcoming school year in which this study will occur.

Introduction to the Problem

The problem is that humanities teachers at Bacon Academy have reported struggling to implement consistent, effective differentiation to meet the literacy needs of their students - particularly in the past two years when traditional methods such as small group instruction have been restricted due to social distancing requirements. As a result, student literacy scores have faltered on standardized tests as well as class-administered assessments. On the other end of the spectrum, more advanced students have not been appropriately challenged as a result of overall instruction being slowed down to better meet the needs of the majority who have missed

significant instructional time due to school shutdowns and resulting curriculum compacting. There is little consistency across grade-levels and academic groupings regarding areas of struggle: for example, within a single class of thirty students there may be ten whose scores indicate vocabulary concerns, while others show deficiencies with command of evidence, main ideas, themes, or editing and revising (this data is available to district staff and will be attached in the full report). Typically, having such a wide scope of needs might be addressed through tracking (Domina et al., 2019), small group instruction (Lyon et al., 2021), or at the very least cycling through different skill focus areas with the whole class. Research has indicated that such interventions are typically effective for improving student literacy, with one meta-analysis reporting that 88% of studies showed that differentiation led to increased student achievement (Puzio et al., 2020). Most literacy differentiation work is focused on reading comprehension, likely because that is what is most frequently assessed in standardized and computer-adaptive testing (Puzio et al., 2020), but research is increasingly being done in related categories such as fluency (Landreth & Young, 2021) and writing (Philippakos & FitzPatrick, 2018), both of which are included in the standards for most humanities classes at the school. Much of literacy differentiation research, however, is aimed at the elementary level, whereas the most common approach at secondary schools has been to track students according to data-based academic abilities, but that is inconsistent (Domina et al., 2019) and does not take into account variability within tracked groups. Bacon Academy's English and social studies classes are only loosely tracked (aside from the advanced placement groups), and accordingly demonstrate a variety of literacy needs that must be simultaneously differentiated for within each individual class.

Significance of the Problem

The stakeholders who may benefit the most from improved literacy differentiation practices are the teachers and the students. For teachers, having an array of differentiation strategies specifically aimed at literacy for secondary students readily available can make planning and lesson design more efficient than having to create something new for each aspect of instruction. Students may benefit by being able to practice and improve upon their individual literacy skills and needs, bypassing the frustrations that can accompany having to work far below or above their own abilities with a whole class. More specifically, this tier-1 differentiation has the potential to significantly benefit special education students who have difficulties with or diagnoses that affect literacy, as they will presumably receive differentiated materials and instruction that target the concerns particular to the needs at their specific age range, whereas many of the differentiation techniques in current usage tend to be broader in scope (e.g., Fisher & Frey, 2018). If successful, this may lead to improved student achievement on literacy tasks, and with that an increase in academic self-concept and reading motivation (Toste et al., 2020; Moller et al., 2020). This concept of differentiating for literacy needs is not at all novel, but it has typically been focused on elementary students and components of reading comprehension (Puzio et al., 2020; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019), while this study seeks to address the needs of secondary students and a wider variety of literacy components, including writing, speaking, and fluency. This research will be conducted at Bacon Academy with English classes of varying tracks and grade levels with the purpose of offering suggestions for literacy differentiation that works for students of all academic abilities, not just focusing on intervention – as differentiation frequently does - for struggling learners. Additionally, a wider purpose for this study is to identify some strategies for literacy differentiation specifically designed for secondary students, as one recent study (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019) found that only 12 out of over one thousand studies provided

empirical data regarding in-class differentiation at the secondary level, and only a few of those were specifically concerned with literacy, suggesting that it is more common for interventions and tracking practices to be used than in-class differentiation. With this study it is hoped that more data-driven and inclusive, age-appropriate approaches to differentiation will aid teachers with their practice and students in improving their literacy achievement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to provide recommendations for humanities teachers at Bacon Academy with possible solutions and strategies for improving targeted classroom-level differentiation in the literacy domains. This applied research study will use both qualitative and quantitative data collection. The first approach will be interviews with five teacher participants, each of whom is familiar with the school's goals toward improving differentiation techniques. The second approach will be a review of student documents that pertain to the differentiation focus areas. Groups of students who receive differentiation for vocabulary practice, for example, will have that category of their assessments reviewed to see if improvements are made as a result of the practices, and likewise for each literacy domain for which content or instruction is differentiated. The third approach will be mixed-methods surveys completed by students using Google Forms. Surveys will be conducted after each cycle of differentiation practices, using Likert-style items to ask student opinions on levels of helpfulness / effectiveness of each strategy and inviting them to elaborate on follow-up items to each survey question. Surveys will be completed by at least 60 but not more than 80 students, depending on final course roster numbers for the school year.

Central Research Question

How can literacy differentiation practices in humanities classes be improved at Bacon Academy?

Key Terms and Definitions

1) Differentiation – "resources, learning tasks, strategies, time for those who are and are not proficient on a standard" (Schunk, 2018, p. 207).

2) Literacy – "reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking in all subjects" (Schunk, 2018, p. 138).

3) Tracking – "separating students by academic ability into groups for all subjects or certain classes and curriculum within a school" (Sadker & Zittleman, 2008, p. 104).

4) Tier 1 Intervention – core instruction, meant to take place within the general classroom, focused on improving student performance on a particular skill or standard (Burns et al., 2015).

PROCEDURES

Overview

The purpose of this study is to provide recommendations for humanities teachers at Bacon Academy with possible solutions and strategies for improving targeted classroom-level differentiation in the literacy domains. Bacon Academy is a mid-size suburban public high school in southeastern Connecticut. This portion of the report provides interview procedures and questions, documents procedures, and survey procedures.

Interviews Procedures

The first approach for data collection will be semi-structured interviews which will allow the researcher to formulate questions tailored to specific topics and subtopics related to the issue (literacy) to be investigated. Additionally, semi-structured interviews allow leeway for the researcher to incorporate answers to interview questions into subsequent items based on the experiences and expertise of the participants. Conducting interviews in this format will allow the researcher to determine how teachers and intervention specialists conduct and have previously conducted literacy differentiation and with what results, thereby providing recommendations of strategies for the researcher to consider in the applied study. Purposeful sampling will be used to select participants based on their knowledge of the research topic (Creswell as cited in Claxton & Michael, 2020) and awareness of the study school's increased focus on differentiation. The five faculty members to be interviewed include one reading instructional coach, one reading intervention specialist, one Advanced Placement United States History teacher, one 10th-grade English teacher, and one 12th-grade English teacher.

Interviews will be conducted on-campus in a one-on-one, face-to-face format using standard protocols. Each interview will be scheduled for approximately 45 minutes and will be

recorded and immediately transcribed for data analysis. The researcher will note tone and diction during interviews, asking follow-up questions based on those attributes to further understand interviewees' thoughts regarding each topic. Once consent is given by the participants, the ten questions listed below will be used for the interviews.

Once the interviews have been conducted, they will be transcribed, reviewed, and coded to identify categories and themes observed in the conversations. Coding and categorization will help the researcher align responses with literature related to the study as well (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as well as point the researcher toward potential new related topics to research and add to the overall study. Themes will be identified throughout the review process and coded according to category (e.g., literacy and intervention). This method will provide ease for the creation of a code table from which the researcher can determine what qualifies items for entries under specific themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018), making the transcription review process efficient. Coding generally requires reading the transcripts of all interviews and identifying themes that are present throughout, with each theme being assigned a specific code, so each new topic that comes up throughout the interviews will be assigned a code, and then the codes will be reviewed for prevalence of each theme among the interviews as a collective. Qualitative data regarding the central research question will be collected via the following ten semi-structured questions with allowances for follow-up questions as appropriate.

Interview Questions

1. How do you determine whether a struggling student needs differentiation, re-tracking / course placement, or intervention for literacy? What are the distinctions between those categories?

The purpose of this question is to determine educators' tendencies toward recommending struggling students for intervention, perhaps thereby unintentionally using either that or level /

track change recommendations in place of tier-1 (main classroom) differentiation. Secondary teachers and schools have a tendency to default to putting students in different tracked classes (e.g., advanced placement, college preparatory, etc.) as a first means to addressing student skill levels and proficiencies that deviate from the mean, particularly in English language arts (ELA) classes (Domina et al., 2019). Tracking is not true differentiation, however, and neither is formal intervention. Therefore, this question is meant to surmise whether part of the differentiation problem is a misunderstanding of exactly what it means in contrast with tracking and intervention.

2. Besides the typical grouping strategy, what literacy differentiation practices do you use that are specifically targeted toward high school students?

This question is simply intended to gauge what methods teachers are employing aside from grouping and what, if any, have been effective for them. Several teachers at the school who have classes of students with diverse skill levels have co-teachers in their classrooms, and one of the most common practices with co-teachers is to employ the method of station teaching, in which students are divided into groups or stations based on their proficiencies and work on tasks aimed at helping them improve with either or both of the instructors, and this is frequently viewed as an efficient way of individualizing instruction (Lyon et al., 2020). Most classes do not have the luxury of the co-teacher, though, and more advanced classes such as honors and advanced placement may still require differentiation, albeit not the kind that takes the guise of literacy interventions such as modified texts. Additionally, stations are often unfeasible and cumbersome, so this question is aimed at determining what approaches have been attempted to streamline the differentiation process in large, diverse classes.

3. What would be most helpful to you to inform your differentiation planning and practices, particularly regarding student literacy?

The purpose of this question is to gain educator input on the topic in order to improve student achievement. Common approaches where schools have closed significant literacy achievement gaps have included co-teaching, inclusive classrooms, and collaboration time in order to plan such practices (Butler & Nasser, 2020). These are relatively common practices at the school already, though the special education department from which the co-teachers come has seen significant turnover and inconsistency over the past several years. As such, this question seeks teacher input if it is the research-informed practices that are causing difficulty or if other accommodations are needed.

4. All intervention is differentiation and the two often get used interchangeably. In your own practice do you tend to consider differentiation first and foremost as intervention?

This question is intended to gage practitioners' levels of understanding of differentiation beyond its usage as a tool for remediation. The concept of differentiation has become ambiguous over the years, with various schools and educators applying it differently, but generally putting much of the focus on the intervention components (Taylor, 2017). Since this study will focus on differentiation to provide enrichment and challenge to high-achieving students as much as support for struggling learners, it is important to establish an understanding of how teachers view differentiation and ensure that emphasis is given to focus on all learners, not just those in need of extra assistance.

5. What data points or types of data do you consider to be the most helpful for informing differentiation?

The purpose of this question is to determine how teachers decide when, how, and for which students to differentiate instruction or materials. This is particularly important to know at the secondary level as components of literacy for which students may need differentiation are not always apparent, such as reading comprehension and fluency, since much reading work is done silently and independently. It is also important for the purpose of trying to establish some consistency of when to apply differentiation strategies, since it is well-documented that this can vary between teachers (Bondie et al., 2019), and in order for this study to have any impact it would help to have consistency of data usage to inform practices and implement at the same time, thereby increasing validity of any findings that may come from implementation.

6. When considering differentiating instruction and/or material for student literacy, are there any components that you tend to consider more than others (e.g., vocabulary vs. text complexity vs. fluency)?

This question is meant to help the researcher determine which components of literacy may need more attention in the study. For example, if all of the participants indicate that they give significant consideration to text complexity and already have many strategies in place, the researcher may give more attention to writing strategies which tend not to receive the same level of consideration (Philippakos & FitzPatrick, 2018). At the same time, if teachers indicate that one component receives significant attention and they want more strategies to aid with it, then the researcher can test approaches that have not yet been attempted by the participants.

7. Aside from complex texts, how do you differentiate literacy for the most gifted and talented students?

8. In general, do you find that student engagement with and motivation for literacy tasks improves with differentiation? If so, which types of tasks and components of literacy?

This question's purpose, similar to the previous one, is to further inform where the researcher should focus in testing literacy differentiation strategies throughout the study. If there is a perception that students are not motivated by differentiation for particular literacy components, the researcher may focus on that area to test strategies, as there is evidence suggesting that student literacy improves with motivation and vice versa – that motivation improves with literacy achievement (Toste et al., 2020).

9. For those students who have engaged more, do you think that their self-efficacy and academic self-concept for literacy has improved?

A follow-up to the previous question, this question is intended to help determine two things: first, whether participants and students view literacy differentiation as worthwhile, especially at the secondary level, since it can be polarizing and is often seen as a waste of time and resources (Puzio et al., 2020). Second, to continue to narrow the focus of what the researcher should emphasize in planning differentiation strategies, as the goal of any differentiation should be to improve students' self-efficacy and academic self-concept so they will continue to improve and be confident when encountering tasks of a similar nature in the future.

10. Technology is particularly ubiquitous with secondary students, so what role do you see technology playing in helping teachers implement literacy differentiation specifically designed for these older learners?

The purpose of this question is to gage participants' thoughts on technology use as a differentiation tool in the classroom. It is undeniable that there are a multitude of technology programs that help students with literacy (Toonder & Sawyer, 2021), so the researcher needs to find ways to incorporate technology into differentiation plans with as little disruption as possible.

To that end, the researcher would like input for how this should be approached while maintaining the integrity of the classroom and the literacy tasks which will be required of students.

Documents Procedures

The second approach for data collection will be document analysis. This approach will help show evidence of the impact of each type of differentiation on student achievement in each isolated literacy domain. Documents will include formative assessments after single implementation of strategies and summative assessments after prolonged and repeated use of strategies. Differentiation for four literacy domains will be conducted throughout the study: vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, synthesis writing, and fluency. These are preliminary choices and subject to change based on student data from pre-assessments that are conducted at the start of the school year. The literacy foci are chosen due to their relevance to the school's overall goals for graduates, the "Bacon 10," which have a strong emphasis on skills in these areas. Additional rationale for these literacy components is their inclusion in the Common Core State Standards for literacy at the high school level, which is used by the school and states that students should be proficient in these skills (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

For each literacy domain the researcher will choose two differentiation strategies, applying them one at a time over a span of three to four weeks each, and collect three formative assessments and one summative assessment from all students (likely to be in the range of 60-80 students). These documents will be obtained directly from students after administering the assessments. The researcher will grade each document and record students' performances on the differentiation focus area in a spreadsheet which will track the control group (non-differentiated instruction or material) versus the experimental group (differentiated). Data gathered will be

presented in tabular format, as trend charts showing changes in student performance, and as a bar graph showing control and experimental group comparisons.

Survey Procedures

The third data collection approach will be mixed-methods surveys completed by students using Google Forms. Surveys will be conducted after each cycle of differentiation practices, using Likert-style items to ask student opinions on levels of helpfulness / effectiveness of each strategy and inviting them to elaborate on follow-up items to each survey question. This will allow for both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected, which is appropriate for the study as it seeks to determine whether the strategies would be helpful specifically for secondary students and data is needed from them to determine the overall perception of whether the implemented strategies help their academic achievement. Student perceptions of effectiveness and utility value are often correlated with engagement, particularly with literacy (Quinn et al., 2019), and no instructional strategy – differentiated or not – is likely to be effective without student engagement, so determining these perceptions further makes this survey useful.

Surveys will be completed by at least 30 but not more than 40 students after each differentiation cycle, depending on final course roster numbers for the school year. This is a purposeful sample because half of the students will receive each differentiation approach in a given cycle while the other half will be kept as the control group, then the groups will switch for the second strategy within each literacy domain. The students in the experimental group will answer the survey at the conclusion of the cycle. In this way, all students will receive differentiation for each literacy domain and be able to provide survey data for at least one differentiation method for the literacy focus area. Participating students will receive the survey as an extra credit assignment on their Google Classroom page with a link to it on Google Forms,

and the survey will ask for consent to participate and include instructions; participants will have one week to complete the survey. Results will be analyzed by calculating the frequency of each number reported on the Likert scale for each question and the average score for each item. Additionally, any follow-up elaboration recorded for each item will be coded by themes that arise in the responses, and this data will be presented in tabular format. The survey will include three demographic questions and ten questions or statements regarding the methods and derived from the literature. Participants will respond using a 5-point Likert scale rating, and each item will have an optional follow-up prompt asking for elaboration. The items on the survey include the following statements and questions.

Survey Questions

Demographic Questions

1. What is your race?

- Black / African-American
- White
- Asian
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Multiple races
- Other (please specify): _____

2. What is your biological sex?

- Male
- Female

3. Which category best describes how often you read independently or were read to at home growing up?

- 0-1 times per week
- 2-4 times per week
- 5-7 times per week

Content Questions

1. How engaged did you feel while learning this method for (insert literacy skill here, which will change with different cycles) during the learning cycle?

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Engaged	Engaged	Neither Engaged nor Disengaged	Disengaged	Strongly Disengaged

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

As noted in the previous section, students need to feel engaged for any instruction to work well, especially differentiation (Burns et al., 2019). Therefore, this item is simply meant to gage whether or not the attempted differentiation strategy is able to cultivate student buy-in, which is an important first step given that sometimes the need for differentiation stems from a lack of interest or motivation, especially regarding literacy (Toste et al., 2020).

2. Did the learning tasks done while working on (insert literacy skill here) feel like they were designed to be too simple or too challenging for your capabilities?

5	4	3	2	1
Too simple / easy	Somewhat simple	Neither too simple nor too difficult	Difficult	Extremely Difficult

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

The purpose of this question is for the researcher to make sure he is not skewing too far toward intervention with the differentiation strategies. This question is based on the notion that educators tend to either blur the lines between intervention and differentiation or outright mistake one for the other (Domina et al., 2019), or simply provide instruction they believe to be appropriate for students' assigned tracks (Hodge, 2018). Therefore, it is important to make sure that the strategies are not perceived by students as meant for intervention or remediation,

especially since such approaches often ignore the more advanced students in need of differentiation.

3. Do you believe that your skills in (insert literacy skill here) improved after having gone through the lessons and learning tasks your teacher gave?

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Improved	Improved	Neither Improved nor Declined	Declined	Strongly Declined

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

This item is meant to measure whether students' academic self-concepts improved as a result of the differentiation strategy. Having a high self-efficacy and academic self-concept is one of the keys to student success (Wu et al., 2021), so any differentiation should aim to improve that for students as part of improving overall achievement.

4. Do you believe the skills and methods you were taught during this cycle are ones that you will be able to use in other classes in addition to English class?

5	4	3	2	1
Definitely	Likely	Maybe	Unlikely	Definitely Not

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

The purpose of this study is to provide literacy differentiation methods for all humanities classes, not just English, so this question is an attempt to measure the transferability of each approach. Additionally, if students do not perceive a learning task to be transferable then they are less likely to engage (Burns et al., 2019), so this item is important to help determine whether each tested strategy will truly be useful.

5. Were the assignments you did while working on (insert literacy skill here) during this cycle similar to or different than assignments you can remember doing related to this in middle and elementary school?

5	4	3	2	1
Very Similar	Similar	Partially Similar	Different	Extremely Different

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

This question is meant to gage whether or not the differentiation strategies are new to students and therefore possibly unique to use in secondary schools (at least in the district under study). This is pertinent information because the study is seeking to provide recommendations specifically for use at the secondary (and mostly high school) level, and nearly all existing literacy differentiation data that currently exists is from the elementary level (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019), so the researcher wants to be sure to provide strategies that are somewhat new and tailored to the needs of older learners.

6. On the summative assessment, how well were you able to recognize and remember how to do each task related to (insert literacy skill here) you worked on during this cycle?

5	4	3	2	1
Easily Remembered	Remembered	Neither Easy nor Difficult to Remember	Difficult to Remember	Unable to Remember

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

Part of the purpose of differentiating instruction and material is to make it so that it is more accessible for students, and that may include automaticity (Jones et al., 2012). Thus, this question seeks to determine whether literacy automaticity improved as a result of the differentiation.

7. I was given a number of different ways to demonstrate my learning regarding (insert literacy skill).

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

One component of differentiation can be providing students with a number of ways to demonstrate their learning (Sibold, 2016). While this may not always be possible, this item nonetheless attempts to determine if students find it to be the case with each differentiation strategy when applicable, thereby granting some credence to the strategy.

8. Did you find working in small groups to be helpful when working on (insert literacy skill)?

5	4	3	2	1
Extremely Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Harmful	Not Helpful	Harmful

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

Each strategy in the study will include at least one session of working in small groups with peers and the teacher, as this has been found to be helpful for student achievement (Lyon et al., 2021). This question, then, serves the purpose of discovering students' perceptions of that approach and whether or not it helped them be successful.

9. Did you feel that the teacher's expectations of you regarding your ability with (insert skill) during the cycle were the same as those for other students?

5	4	3	2	1
Always	Sometimes	Not Sure	Rarely	Never

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

The purpose of differentiation is to help all students reach the same standard of academic expectations and success within the curriculum (Tomlinson, 2018). Therefore, this question is meant to help measure whether students feel expectations are being kept high throughout the differentiation process and inform the researcher of whether a strategy is in danger of being invalid as a result of altered expectations.

10. Did you feel you had sufficient freedom to work ahead individually or seek out teacher assistance as fit your needs throughout the cycle?

5	4	3	2	1
Very Free to Choose What I Needed	Somewhat Free	Neither Free nor Constrained	Somewhat Constrained	Extremely Constrained

Reason for rating above (optional): _____

This final question is intended to check whether the teacher is providing students with autonomy and, as with an earlier question, not falling into habits of making differentiation overly focused on intervention for struggling learners (Domina et al., 2019). This question's purpose is to measure if the differentiation approaches are inclusive in providing excelling students as well as typical and struggling students the support they need.

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